

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1 (currently amended): A fluid sampling probe for aspirating fluid samples from closed fluid carriers comprising:

a first portion for piercing a closed fluid carrier,

a second portion serving as a reservoir for receiving a-an amount of fluid corresponding to a fluid sample from the closed fluid carrier, the second portion being formed integrally operative with the first portion for piercing the closed fluid carrier, and

a third portion providing fluid communication between the first and second portion.

2 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in claim 1, wherein the second portion comprises a disposable molded reservoir having a capacity sufficient for containing at least one sample volume of fluid from the closed fluid carrier.

3 (previously presented): A probe as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first portion comprises the piercing head of a relatively small diameter hypodermic needle.

4 (previously presented): A probe as claimed in claim 3, wherein the needle gauge of the hypodermic needle is in the range of 12-20 AWG.

5 (previously presented): A probe as claimed in claim 2, wherein the disposable reservoir is joined to the first portion by a UV cured adhesive joint such that the probe forms a disposable combination for single use.

6 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in claim 3, wherein the second portion comprises a disposable molded reservoir of one of a plurality of sizes to accommodate a range of sample volumes from closed fluid carriers.

7 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first portion is moveable with respect to the second portion such that, upon disengaging with the second portion, a fluid flow path from the closed fluid carrier to the second portion is formed between a distal end of the second portion and ~~the~~a head of the first portion.

8 (currently amended): A probe as claimed in claim 7, wherein the first portion comprises ~~the~~a head of a trocar needle.

9 (original): A probe as claimed in claim 8, wherein the second portion comprises a cannular needle for accommodating a relatively small diameter shaft of the trocar needle therewithin such that the second portion is defined by a wall of the cannular needle acting as an outer envelope for the received fluid.

10 (previously presented): A probe as claimed in claim 9, wherein the second portion is a hollowed vessel.

11 (previously presented): A probe as claimed in claim 1, wherein the probe is disposable.

12 (currently amended): An automated fluid sampling system comprising:

- a handling mechanism for conveying a plurality of closed fluid carriers;
- a fluid sampling station for receiving and locating the closed fluid carriers conveyed by the handling mechanism, and wherein the system is adapted to operatively accommodate at least one fluid sampling probe for aspirating fluid samples from the closed fluid carriers including
 - a first portion for piercing a closed fluid carrier,
 - a second portion serving as a reservoir for receiving ~~a~~an amount of fluid corresponding to a fluid sample from the pierced closed fluid carrier, the second portion being formed integrally operative with the first portion for piercing the closed fluid carrier, and
 - a third portion providing fluid communication between the first and second portion.

13 (previously presented): A probe as claimed in claim 12, wherein the second portion is adapted at one end thereof to form a mechanical connection between the fluid sampling probe and the fluid sampling system.

14 (original): A probe as claimed in claim 13 wherein the second portion comprises a Luer fitting for forming the mechanical connection between the fluid sampling probe and the fluid sampling system.

15 (currently amended): A method of sampling a fluid from a closed fluid carrier using a probe including a first portion for piercing ~~a-the~~ closed fluid carrier, a second portion serving as a reservoir for receiving a fluid from the closed fluid carrier, the second portion being formed integrally operative with the first portion for piercing the closed fluid carrier, and a third portion providing fluid communication between the first and second portion, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) piercing the closed fluid carrier with a portion of the probe;
- (b) advancing the first portion of the probe into contact with the fluid of the closed fluid carrier;
- (c) forming a fluid flow path between the fluid of the closed fluid carrier and the second portion of the probe;
- (d) aspirating a volume of the fluid of the closed fluid carrier along the fluid flow path;
- (e) retaining the volume of fluid of the closed fluid carrier within the second portion of the probe upon withdrawal of the probe from the closed fluid carrier.

16 (original): A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein a trocar needle is used for step (e).

17 (previously presented): A method as claimed in claim 15, further comprising the step of:

- (f) using the probe to dispense at least one sample of fluid as required.

18 (previously presented): A method as claimed in claim 15 further comprising the step of:

- (g) disposing of the fluid sampling probe.

19 (original): A method as claimed in claim 18, further comprising the step of:

- (h) exchanging the disposed probe with one of a plurality of probes having a range of second portion sizes and/or shapes, and;
- (i) repeating steps (a) to (g).

20 (original): A method as claimed in claim 15 wherein, step (c) further comprises the step of axially extending the first portion from sealed engagement with the second portion to form the fluid flow path.

21 (currently amended): A method as claimed in claim 20 wherein, step (e) further comprises the step of axially retracting the first portion to sealingly engage the second portion prior to withdrawal of the probe from the closed fluid carrier.

22-30 (canceled)

31 (previously presented): A system as claimed in claim 12 wherein the sampling probe comprises a trocar needle having a head and a shaft, the shaft being hollow for enclosing at least one sample volume within and for dispensing the at least one sample as required.

32-33 (canceled)